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Review of The Etruscan World, ed. by Jean MacIntosh Turfa

Theresa Huntsman

Harvard Art Museums, theresa_huntsman@harvard.edu

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The Etruscan World, ed. by JEAN MACINTOSH TURFA. London and New York: Routledge, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-415-67308; 1167 pages; 727 illustrations.

Reviewed by THERESA HUNTSMAN, Harvard University Art Museums

In the Introduction to this impressive volume, Turfa states that the goal of *The Etruscan World* is not “to replace the major recent works in English on Etruscan culture, but rather to supplement and augment them with in-depth studies of special fields, and to present the very latest discoveries and analyses” (2). And in this mission, she succeeds admirably.

Developing a framework for 63 topical essays by 62 different contributors is no easy task. The book is organized into eight thematic sections, yet each contribution is discrete and could stand alone as an article. A bibliography is included at the end of each essay, and there is a master index covering the entire volume. Almost all essays are illustrated in black and white.

I. Environment, Background, and the Study of Etruscan Culture

Section I “sets the stage” for Etruscan studies, from the earliest theories to the latest scientific analysis. Wiman addresses Etruria’s physical environment in terms of geography, geology, and natural resources alongside ancient and early modern testimony and paleobotanical studies. Bagnasco Gianni and Briquel both discuss the historiography of theories surrounding Etruscan origins, from Herodotus to Pallottino and beyond. Finally, a key recent contribution to answering these questions is Kron’s essay on demography and the physical anthropological study of Etruscan osteological remains and DNA analysis.

II. The Historical Development of Etruria

The application of Greek chronological-artistic time periods to the Etruscan world is a convention long-used but difficult to resolve, and this section outlines that difficulty in the selection of topics. Bartoloni’s discussion of Villanovan culture (with a well-organized bibliography) is followed by Sannibale’s outline of the Orientalizing phenomenon through funerary art and iconography. Leighton’s contribution, a social complexity survey of urbanization over five centuries, is quite short and shies away from Greek periodization. Then there is a gap in the development, which is where Etruscan scholarship has a difficult time rectifying the transition between Archaic and Hellenistic periods. A “Classical” period of artistic development does not really hold in Etruria and is avoided here. Jolivet’s and Nielsen’s contributions on the “Romanization” of Etruria, beginning in the fourth century BCE, start with the political and historical framework of events and continue illustrating the changes via

funerary art, specifically cremation urns of Volterra as “the last Etruscans” before full Roman political and cultural domination.

III. Etruscans and Their Neighbors

Eight different contributions address Etruscan interactions with other cultural groups, beginning with Lo Schiavo’s well-organized summary of cultures in the Western Mediterranean, both native and foreign, and early trade connections. This, and the next three contributions (Lo Schiavo and Milletti; D’Oriano and Sanciu; Milletti) focus on native cultures and Phoenicians/Punic people of Sardinia and Corsica. Additionally, Gran-Aymerich’s essay on interactions with Iberia, Massalia, and Gaul focuses on Etruscan interactions with foreign cultures via trade. While Sassatelli/Govi and Cuozzo discuss the northern Etruscan settlements of the Po and the southern settlements of Campania, respectively, the only essay that truly deals with Etruscan neighbors on the Italian peninsula is that of De Lucia Brolli and Tabolli on the Faliscans. A notable gap here is Etruscan-Oscan interaction (in fact, the Oscans are not indexed in this volume), as well as Etruscan-Latin interaction. In the case of the latter, however, these interactions are discussed at length in other sections.

IV. Etruscan Society and Economy

Many still believe that the Etruscan language is nearly indecipherable, and the contributions to this section are important updates to the study of Etruscan economy, politics, and society via language. Becker’s essay, while it does rely heavily on ancient literary sources for explanations of our often nebulous knowledge of Etruscan political structures and how they relate to territory and religion, her discussion is grounded in Etruscan inscriptions on important administrative objects like weights and boundary stones. Gran-Aymerich and Turfa present a very helpful summary of Etruscan objects found in foreign contexts, divided into object types, then archaeological context types, as an illustration of the impressive extent of economic interaction between Etruria and the greater Mediterranean world. Like Becker, Benelli’s essay on slavery presents historical evidence, but grounds it well in epigraphic evidence and presents a historiography of this institution. Agostiniani’s and Maras’s contributions on language and numbers are both incredibly useful, updated summaries of what we know and what inscriptions reveal about Etruscan society, trade, and politics. One contribution that seems slightly out of place here, but is important nonetheless, is Bonfante’s essay on mothers and children. Beginning with the famous letter from Theopompus complaining about what Etruscan women were allowed to do in public, she then explains family structure both socially and biologically through a variety of objects.

V. Religion in Etruria

Described as “the most religious of all peoples,” it is no surprise there are ten essays in this section. Beginning with complementary essays from Simon on Greek myth, Krauskopf on the Etruscan pantheon, and de Grummond on Augury. The section then situates Etruscan religious practice in the archaeological evidence, including descriptions of religious sites (Edlund-Berry on the typology of sanctuaries, Bagnasco Gianni on Tarquinia/Gravisca, Baglione on Pyrgi, and Stopponi on Orvieto). Rafanelli presents iconographic and archaeological evidence for ritual practices, and Steingraber and Rasmussen each on religious practices relating to the funerary sphere. The former’s contribution is organized into helpful topical sections.

VI. Special Aspects of Etruscan Culture

Clearly a catchall category for contributions on both traditional and non-traditional topics, this section emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to the Etruscan world. The first three essays deal with aspects of Etruscan control of the environment, through interpreting the cosmos (Cherici), architectural forms (Edlund-Berry), and town planning (Bizzarri). Technological and scientific studies into metallurgy, warfare, ideology (Giardino, George, Cowan, Emiliozzi), piracy and seafaring (Bruni) and medicine (Turfa and Becker) bring together ancient literary evidence, archaeological remains, and technical studies of materials and organics. Likewise, studies relating to art and artistic representation and their roles in the social sphere combine multiple approaches, from art historical, to sociological, to scientific analysis. Subjects covered include eating, drinking, and the banquet (Pieraccini, Rathje), sport, drama, and music (Thuillier, Tobin), and textile production (Gleba), both real and represented in art.

VII. Etruscan Specialties in Art

Etruscan art is separated primarily by medium and object type, but it begins with a contribution by Giovannangelo Camporeale on artists and artisans in Etruria, specifically foreigners, and the spread of artistic motifs, ideas, and techniques. Instead of the blanket appropriation of foreign commodities and tastes that earlier scholarship has proposed, Camporeale emphasizes the importance of agents, both artists and merchants, in the development of Etruscan art and aesthetic tastes. Contributions discuss terracottas, both architectural and sculptural (Winter, Nagy, Recke), jewelry and gems (Gaultier, Hansson), locally produced ceramics (Ambrosini, De Puma), bronzes (Scarpellini, De Puma), and wall painting (Nagy). Genre-centered contributions from Carpino on portraiture, Harrison on animals, and Recke on science and anatomy broaden the discussion to thematic comparisons in multiple media.

VIII. Post-Antique Reception of Etruscan Culture

This last section is a fitting epilogue to Etruscan studies with two essays focusing on some of the first “Etruscologists” and collectors of Etruscan objects, Annio da Viterbo (Rowland) and Dempster and Buonarrotti (De Angelis). The final contribution on modern scholarly approaches to the Etruscans (Haack) provides a concise chronological summary of key scholars and publications from the Renaissance through the nationalism of the twentieth century.

As a whole, this volume is a solid, important resource on the Etruscan world. It is well edited, indexed, and presented in a legible way. It is heavily illustrated, which is key for this field, but some of the same images appear in multiple contributions; this is probably due, at least in part, to the difficult task of coordinating over 700 images. A selection of color plates would have greatly benefitted some of the essays, especially those referring to wall painting (Thuillier, pp. 831-840; Nagy, pp. 1017-1025) and ceramics (Ambrosini, pp. 943-973). Also, I was surprised that new maps were not produced for the main map references at the beginning of the volume; instead they were reproduced from other publications, the latest of which dates to 1981.

The nature of *The Etruscan World* lends itself well to the e-book format (which Routledge published at the same time). I found this to be useful searching a single topic, theme, or archaeological site across multiple essays. While it is very comprehensive, this book covers a lot of ground with discrete contributions and no overarching narrative. It is best suited for those already familiar with Etruscan studies, or at the very least, Italy in the Greco-Roman world. As an interdisciplinary English-language resource, it is indispensable for learning about recent developments, major issues, and bibliography for a number of sub-fields.

Sardis Expedition
Harvard Art Museums
32 Quincy St
Cambridge, MA 02138
email: theresa_huntsman@harvard.edu

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